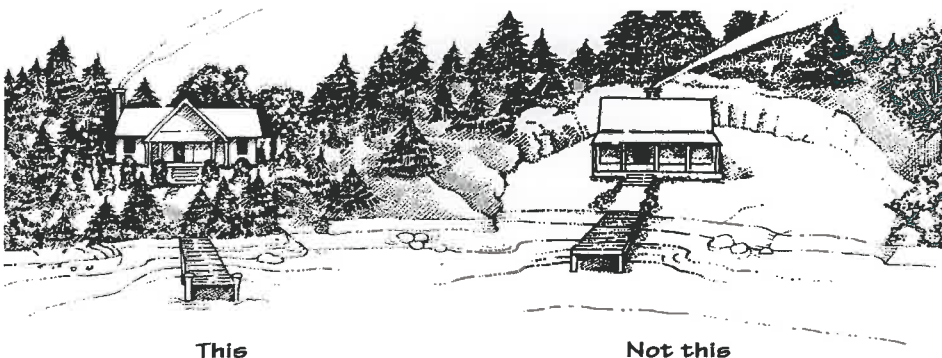# Only You...Can Save Your Lake!

The actions of lake and pond shoreland owners are critical to healthy waters. The following is a brief list of how you can save your favorite lake and protect its ecology, health and your enjoyment into the future.

Please...	How	Why
Go Wild!	• Leave trees and shrubs in a strip up to 100 feet wide along the shore. • Replant native trees and shrubs between your camp and the water. • Reduce lawn size adjacent to the lake. • Don't use fertilizers or pesticides on lawns near the lake. • Instead of repairing or installing a retaining wall, create a vegetated bank.	• Lawns are not effective at erosion control or filtering runoff. • Natural vegetation: ◊ stabilizes the bank; ◊ enhances in-lake habitat; ◊ looks nice from the lake; and ◊ provides shoreland bird and animal homes and food. • Fertilizer and pesticide runoff unnecessarily pollutes the lake with nutrients and toxins.
No Beach is a Good Beach	Don't add sand or other fill to the lake. (Natural beaches are, of course, fine but rare in Vermont!)	Adding sand suffocates the natural bottom habitat, plus can introduce polluting silt to the water. (A permit is required to add fill to a lake, call 802-241-3777 for information.)
Keep Soil on the Ground	Keep land disturbance well back from the water; leave a wide buffer of natural vegetation between soil disturbance and the lake. Surround a work area with a filter screen; mulch, reseed, and replant as soon as possible; and complete work before Sept. 15 (so seed sprouts before winter).	• Eroded soil is the number one pollutant to Vermont lakes and ponds! • Sediment carries the nutrient phosphorus to lakes, causing algae blooms and excessive weed growth, and mucky deposits. • Turbidity threatens fish and other aquatic life.
Mind your Driveway Manners	Maintain your driveway so that runoff from it cannot reach the lake or pond. • Install waterbars to direct flow into vegetated areas. • Rock-line steep ditches. • Crown it annually. • Relocate it if necessary. • Work with your town road commissioner on preventing erosion of town roads.	• Eroded soil is the number one pollutant to Vermont lakes and ponds! • Sediment carries the nutrient phosphorus to lakes. • Turbidity threatens fish and other aquatic life. • Good driveway maintenance saves you money over the long-run.
Don't Go in the Lake	Learn about your septic system. • Conserve water. • Don't add garbage disposals, washing machines or dishwashers unless you're sure your system meets current standards. • Replace systems that don't meet standards. • Pump septic tanks every 3-5 years.	If any part of your septic system is closer than 50 feet to the lake, or less than 2 feet above the lake level, you could be polluting the lake. A poor or overloaded system can introduce disease-causing organisms into the lake, resulting in a human health threat **and** can introduce nutrients into the lake, causing algae blooms and excessive weed growth.
Watch those Ducks	Don't feed waterfowl.	Resident duck and goose populations increase disease causing bacteria in the water, and can increase the incidence of swimmer's itch. Ducks or geese can even be a significant source of nutrients to lakes or ponds.

Please...	*How*	*Why*
Be Careful Who You Invite Home	Make sure you aren't transporting organisms from one lake to another. Carefully wash and inspect your boat (and other gear) before moving it to another lake. Learn to identify **Eurasian watermilfoil, water chestnut**, and **zebra and quagga mussels**. Keep a watch out for them in your lake. Plant only native species along the lakeshore. Don't dump bait buckets or aquariums into the lake.	Exotic plant and animal infestations are a serious problem in Vermont lakes, causing significant recreational and ecological damage. Only careful vigilance by all lake users can prevent the spread of harmful exotic species. It is against the law to transport these four species from one surface water to another in Vermont.
Gas and Water Don't Mix	Replace 2-stroke boat engines with 4-stroke or direct-injection 2-stroke engines.	• 2-stroke motors emit 20-30% of the fuel-oil mixture unburned into the lake. • 4-strokes are quieter, use half the gas and have 90% fewer emissions.
Be Kind to Your Neighbors	Protect and support the local wildlife; • stay away from loon and other nest areas; • protect shoreland wetlands; and • enhance your shoreline with native vegetation (see Go Wild above).	Lakes are part of the diversity of native habitats in Vermont. Their important role in providing food, shelter and breeding areas for Vermont fish and wildlife cannot be overstated.
Get the Lead Out	Switch from lead sinkers to those made from steel or other materials.	Lead sinkers lost in the lake are often mistakenly eaten by fish or water fowl. In 1998 to 1999, 53% of the loon deaths investigated in Vermont were caused by lead poisoning.
Build Responsibly	Any work in the lake such as dock or wall building may require a Shoreline Encroachment permit. (Call 802-241-3777.)	Artificial structures alter the natural functions of a shoreline, by removing vegetation and altering the natural lake bottom. Also, improperly done work can cause excess turbidity in the water.
Be safe!	Learn about Vermont's boating safety laws (call 802-244-8727 for a booklet).	Make lakes safe and enjoyable for everyone!
Work Together	Join the local lake or pond association, or start one. Get involved in town policy and planning discussions; assist the planning commission with lake protection issues. Join the Federation of VT Lakes and Ponds, http://www.vtlakes.org/.	Many lakes and ponds have associations dedicated to taking care of the lake. They are involved in projects such as water sampling, landowner education, boating safety and watershed management. Town Select Boards, planning and conservation commissions are good allies for lake protection.

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To obtain additional information on any of these topics, or to obtain the entire Lake Protection Series, please contact the Lakes and Ponds Section at (802) 241-3777 or visit www.vtwaterquality.org/lakes.htm.

Illustration courtesy of Maine Dept of Environmental Protection